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ABSTRACT

In 1997, the Education Department of Western Australia, in conjunction with the teachers' union, initiated a trial project to establish a career path for teachers. Standards are to be set for the career path for three stages: (1) entry to Level 1; (2) transition from Level 1 to 2; and (3) transition from Level 2 to 3. This paper discusses the research undertaken to establish professional competency standards for the transition from Level 2 to Level 3. The first issue is how to group or categorize teachers. When analysis of a sample of teaching portfolios suggested that establishing categories similar to those used by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards was not appropriate, alternative groupings were generated based on teachers' descriptions of their context, philosophy, and professional practice. The second issue relates to setting the "standard." As part of the selection process for Level 3, 40 elementary and 40 secondary school teaching portfolios were assessed on the quality of the evidence presented to demonstrate achievement of each of five competencies. Teaching portfolios rated equivalently were analyzed to see if there was any consistency in the professional practices of these teachers. This analysis generated a "standard" for each band of ratings that was then used in determining the appropriate level of professional expertise needed to achieve Level 3 Classroom Teacher status. These issues are discussed in relation to current understandings of the description and assessment of competencies, the development of professional expertise, and standard setting. (Contains 5 tables and 17 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Issues in establishing professional competency-based teaching standards: an analysis of processes used in determining Level 3 Classroom Teachers in Western Australia.

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Anne M Jasman

Abstract

Educational and school reform agendas are premised on the centrality of quality teaching for quality learning. A well articulated description of what constitutes quality teaching is seen as critical in bringing about improvement to student learning outcomes. It was from this perspective that the Education Department of Western Australia with the support of the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia implemented a trial project in 1997 to establish a career path for teachers as part of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. Standards are to be set within the career path for three stages: entry to Level 1, transition from Level 1 to 2 and from Level 2 to 3. This paper discusses the research undertaken to establish professional competency standards for the transition from Level 2 to Level 3 .

Two issues are addressed. First, how best to 'group' or 'categorise' teachers is considered. The original research design was based on establishing categories similar to those used by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. However, analysis of a sample of teaching portfolios suggested that this categorisation was inappropriate. Alternative groupings were generated based on teachers' descriptions of their context, philosophy and professional practice. The second issue discussed relates to the setting of the 'standard'. As part of the selection process for Level 3 Classroom Teachers each teaching portfolio was assessed on the quality of evidence provided to demonstrate achievement of each of five competencies (Jasman and Barrera, 1998). Teaching portfolios rated equivalently were analyzed to see if there was any consistency in the professional practices of these teachers. This analysis generated a description of the 'standard' for each band of ratings which were then used in determining the appropriate level of professional expertise needed to achieve Level 3 Classroom Teacher status. These issues are discussed in relation to our current understandings of the description and assessment of competencies, the development of professional expertise and standard setting.

Introduction:

The development of professional teaching standards has proceeded with remarkable speed within a number of countries. Many of these developments have occurred in the last two years. In a recent review of professional teaching standards conducted by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (1998) a number of international and national standard setting developments are described. These include examples from Canada, New Zealand, England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland. Longer standing initiatives such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the United States are also reviewed. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded in 1987 for the purpose of developing professional teaching standards and accreditation of highly accomplished teachers. The standards emphasize the holistic nature of teaching while they seek to describe how the standards come to life in different settings; identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that support a teacher's performance at a high level; show how a teacher's professional judgement is reflected in observable actions; and reflect the five propositions in the policy statement, What teachers should know and be able to do. These five propositions state that teachers: are committed to students and their learning; know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and are members of learning communities.

In the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification process it is, therefore, necessary for teachers to demonstrate core professional knowledge and skills - or in terms used within this research - their professional expertise. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards also suggests that the broad base for expertise in teaching

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> conceals the complexities, uncertainties and dilemmas of the work. The formal knowledge teachers rely on accumulates steadily, yet provides insufficient guidance in many situations. Teaching ultimately requires judgment, improvisation, and conversation about means and ends. Human qualities, expert knowledge and skill, and professional commitment together compose excellence in this craft.
> http://www.nbpts.org/nbpts/standards/know-do.html Feb, 1998

Three main aims are articulated for the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: first, to change the quality of education in the USA; second, to enhance the professional practice of teachers and finally, to make teaching a profession.

Within the Australian context Peacock (1992) suggested that national competency standards for teachers may enhance the quality of teaching by describing

> what counts as competence, as a basis for developing and delivering pre- and in-service training and for making decisions about entry to the profession and career progression. (Louden and Wallace, 1993, 45 - 46).

In a recent report (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998) into the status of the teaching profession the Senate Inquiry recommended the establishment of a national professional teaching standards and registration body. It was envisaged that this would have the responsibility, authority and resources to develop and maintain standards of professional practice and should

> establish standards of professional practice which take into account what teachers should know and be able to do in order to facilitate student learning across the key learning areas
>
> certify levels of entry into the profession, criteria for re-registration and recognition of advanced standing in the profession
>
> accredit programs of initial teacher training
>
> and establish the professional development framework for the maintenance of the professional expertise of teachers
>
> (Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ix)

Although the Senate Inquiry recommended a national body it is unlikely in the Australian political context that rights of States will be relinquished in this regard. Teacher Registration Boards or Standard Setting Authorities already exist in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. New South Wales has recently put legislation for a Teacher Registration Board before parliament and other States such as Western Australia are considering the establishment of a Teacher Registration Board, and have a Centre for Excellence in Teaching with a brief to explore the setting of standards. Such standards may be derived from a variety of possible sources; for example, standards have been based on

> Government regulations and/or other statutory requirements
>
> Descriptions the expected outcomes of teaching
>
> Preferences of clients and stakeholders
>
> Theories of learning and cognition, including theories of teacher development
>
> Analysis of teachers' work
>
> Views of the teaching profession

Ingvarson (1995) in his discussion of developing teaching standards and performance assessments researched best practice and provided four detailed case studies on work done in developing teaching standards. Those reviewed included:

> The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
>
> Professional standards for the teaching of mathematics

The National Research Council project on National Science Education Standards (NSES)

Science Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

Standards for National Board Certification

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

The cases provide evidence that the development of professional standards is feasible providing time, resources and expertise are available. They also provide details of the likely costs, management and logistical issues that are involved. They show how the standards for teaching can be embedded in the subject being taught and that they can be written in forms that do not prescribe particular styles of teaching. Particular reference is made in the case of each of these sets of standards to the role played by professional associations, as well as other stakeholders in the development of these standards.

Benefits to the setting of professional standards have emerged with the operation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. For example, there are reports of teachers undergoing significant professional renewal through engaging in the processes of certification (Haynes, 1995). Another key benefit of the current standard- setting movement is identified by Ball (1992) as consensus-building. Ingvarson (1996) lists six benefits of professional standards for teaching including fulfilling the need for valid and nationally consistent standards and methods of teacher assessments for the development of career structures based on teaching expertise and for rewarding increases in quality of teaching. He also argues that teaching standards are the essential foundation for the main quality assurance mechanisms in any profession: accreditation, registration and advanced certification.

Given these benefits, in particular the assertion that valid and nationally consistent standards and methods of teacher assessment are essential for career structures, it was entirely appropriate to explore further the development of professional standards. However, the question of how best to approach the development of standards and the appropriateness of various existing models, in particular the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is explored in the following section.

A career structure for classroom teachers — the competency framework, selection and assessment for Level 3 Classroom Teachers in WA

Context

The development of professional standards and their potential use in the selection of Level 3 Classroom Teachers is part of a project funded by the Education Department of Western Australia as a trial into the development of a career structure for classroom teachers. The purposes described in the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (1996) for the Teachers' Career Structure are to _

support the retention of competent, experienced teachers in duties directly related to teaching and learning;

give status and recognition to the commitment of teachers to the development of their colleagues and school communities, as well as their own ongoing professional development;

expand career paths for teachers who do not want or who do not wish or are not able move into the administrative role; and

use these teachers skills to maximise the outcomes of students.

The tender document specified that the new career structure for classroom teachers should be based on a competency framework and that standards be set within the career path for transition between three stages: entry to Level 1, transition from Level 1 to 2 and from Level 2 to 3. The project was therefore comprised of two major elements:

The development and implementation of the trial selection processes using a competency framework for the appointment of Level 3 Classroom Teachers.

The development of professional standards based on this competency framework.

The form of the selection processes took account of the arguments of Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1994) for the development of career structures that provide status and financial reward for teachers who see their main responsibility as improving learning outcomes through their work with students in classrooms. The significant elements of this career development model for the articulation of professional competencies and teaching standards in this project are:

the articulation of what makes up professional expertise

the 'milestones' which represent significant advances in professional expertise

teaching standards based on the description of a teacher's professional expertise at these various 'milestones' which constitute the various levels of a career structure

the assessment of a teacher's professional knowledge and skills using multiple sources of data

a criteria-based selection (with no quotas) for entry to each level of the career structure

the rewards and pay structure associated with these levels

Competencies

The description of professional expertise which informed the development of the five competencies and associated indicators of attainment to be used in the Level 3: Classroom Teacher selection process is considered in detail elsewhere (Jasman, 1998). These competencies were derived from research and theories about effective teaching and other competency frameworks grounded in the ways teachers write and talk about their professional expertise and practices in their work (Jasman and Barrera, 1998, 3- 7). They are detailed below.

Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competencies

Utilise innovative and/or exemplary teaching strategies and techniques in order to more effectively meet the learning needs of individual students, groups and/or classes of students. (Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competency 1)

Employ consistent exemplary practice in developing and implementing student assessment and reporting processes. (Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competency 2)

Engage in a variety of self-development activities, including a consistent high level of critical reflection on one's own teaching practice and teacher leadership, to sustain a high level of ongoing professional growth. (Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competency 3)

Enhance teachers' professional knowledge and skills through employing effective development strategies. (Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competency 4)

Provide high level leadership in the school community through assuming a key role in school development processes including curriculum planning and management and school policy formulation. (Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competency 5)

Assessing teaching competence

It is recognized that the ability to talk about one's competence and the achievement of such competencies in not necessarily the same as being able to put them into effect in the work environment. The trend in selection processes has now turned to techniques that allow applicants to demonstrate in a realistic situation, the competencies on which they are being assessed. Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1994) suggest that evaluation is summative, criterion-based and uses multiple sources of data to demonstrate achievement of the particular standard of professional knowledge and skill. They also suggest that teachers should be assessed by a 'college of specialists'. Within the selection processes for Level 3 Classroom Teachers both these suggestions have been addressed.

First, it was proposed to use both the documentation of real teaching experiences and an 'assessment centre' exercise

(Nyirenda, 1994) for assessment of teachers attainment of the competencies through a teaching portfolio and a reflective review process. Second, assessors were drawn from a pool of experienced classroom teachers who received training to complete the assessments and engaged in moderation exercises to improve the reliability and validity of the selection processes.

The teaching portfolio (Martin, 1997a) allows teachers the opportunity to select those aspects of the work they wish to use to provide evidence of attainment of each competency. It is also a relatively cheap process to operate as the teaching portfolio is constructed within very strict guidelines to alleviate the potential problems of irrelevance identified by Nyirenda (1994). Whilst this method provides considerable evidence of performance in the workplace it is also desirable to use an alternative performance assessment which can provide some primary evidence of attainment of some if not all competencies.

Ideally, teachers would be observed in their work situation over an extended period of time, to gain a full appreciation of their competencies. As a practical alternative to this, the Reflective Review (Martin, 1997b) is designed to provide applicants with an opportunity to demonstrate their competencies in a situation where they are interacting with their peers, in a way not too dissimilar to a work situation. This assessment centre type exercise has been devised to minimise some of the costs of various simulation/role play type exercises and also to provide as broad a sampling of competencies as possible. Assessment of the teachers' achievement of the competencies was, therefore, based on two data sources: the teaching portfolio and the reflective review. Further details of these selection processes can be found in Jasman and Barrera (1998).

The competency framework which underpinned assessment and selection processes for the Level 3 Classroom Teacher was developed as a standards-based competency framework (Walker, 1992, 24) and formed the 'criteria' on which selection was based as suggested by the career development model proposed by Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1994). Selection to this position thus rewards professional expertise and work practices which are associated with quality teaching and student learning outcomes both for the individual teacher, their colleagues and the wider community. It is not based on tasks or on particular duties performed. The following discussion attempts to draw out the key points that have informed the project team in completing the development of the professional standards based on this competency framework before considering the issues involved in 'setting the standard' for appointment to the Level 3 Classroom Teacher position.

Standards development phase

Concerns

One of the key issues Ingvarson (1995) identifies regarding the development of standards is that time, resources and expertise are essential for their development. Within the context of this project the time line from commencement to completion was nine months. Three months of this time was available for teachers to compile a teaching portfolio. There clearly was insufficient time available to invest in the kind of professional standards development supported by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and alternative strategies had to be explored.

A key concern that informed our decisions in the development of professional teaching standards is that they should accurately reflect the reality of teachers' work. By using selection strategies such as the teaching portfolio and the reflective review the project team were able to access an individual teacher's experiences. Thus the teaching portfolio provided details of the contexts in which these teachers work, their underlying beliefs and values which were evident through the introductory statement required in the teaching portfolio. Teacher responses to each of the five competencies, the evidence presented and the discussions between teachers during the reflective reviews provided a rich source of examples of highly accomplished professional practice.

Whilst it is recognised that teachers have not been involved in writing the draft professional competency-based teaching standards, it can be argue that they do reflect teachers' own understandings of what constitutes highly accomplished practice. The standards are constructed from the material submitted in the teaching portfolios of selected teachers and although edited to ensure anonymity often use the words of the teachers. These draft professional competency-based teaching standards have been further refined with reference to supporting evidence drawn from the reflective review, assessors statements and feedback from those teachers whose portfolio examples have been used in the draft standards. These sources again provide input from teachers into development processes.

Selection of teacher portfolios for the draft professional competency-based teaching standards

The selection of teaching portfolios used in the development of the draft professional competency standards was based on the preliminary assessment and ranking of applicants completed early in November. Initially 40 portfolios were selected from the pool of primary teachers' portfolios and 40 from the pool of secondary teachers' portfolios to form the basis of the draft

standards. The portfolios used in the development of the standards are those which provided sufficient good quality evidence to identify them as being highly accomplished, potential Level 3 Classroom Teachers. Thus the first basis for selection was the quality of evidence provided in relation to each of the competencies. For selection the portfolio had to provide at least good quality evidence (a combined score of 10), where possible the portfolios selected showed evidence rated as very good (11/12) or outstanding (13/14).

It was originally planned to reflect the categories of standards being developed for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. These include categories for early childhood, middle primary, early adolescence for generalist teachers; middle primary, early adolescence, adolescence and young adults for those who teach English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies and subject specialization in primary and secondary. http://www.nbpts.org/nbpts/standards/summaries.html Specific reference to teachers working in educational support facilities was anticipated as necessary within the Western Australian context.

The initial selection of portfolios was in line with the proposal to collect information for 16 distinct groups based on secondary and primary location; subject or age specializations and a group from educational support. It was anticipated that the first 10 teachers ranked in each group would be used to draft the standards. This process was varied as the preliminary analysis of the portfolios highlighted that there would be insufficient teachers in some categories as indicated in Tables 1-5. However given the range of successful applicants the portfolios distributed as follows with respect to teaching responsibilities, gender and school detailed in Tables 1 - 5.

Table 1: Primary teachers' portfolios used to develop draft standards

Primary teachers	by age range taught	Primary	12
		Pre-primary	5
		Junior primary	4
	by specialist subject area	Art	1
		Drama	1
		Library, library support	4
		LOTE	2
		Music	1
		Physical education	1
		Science	1
	by student disability	Educational support	3
		Special needs/language	1
	by type of support role	Early literacy and numeracy	2
		Educational support	1
		Intensive language	1
TOTAL			40

Table 2: Secondary teachers' portfolios used to develop draft standards

Secondary teachers	by subject area	Art	3
		Computer education	1
		Design and technology	3
		Drama	1
		English	4
		Health and Physical education	1
		Home economics	1
		Languages other than English	1
		Mathematics	2
		Mathematics and Science	3
		Physical education	1
		Science	4
		English and SOSE	1
		Studies of Society and Environment	4
	by support role	ESL	1
		Intensive language	1
		Library	1
		Literacy/Aboriginal studies	1
		Low achievers	1
		Reading resource	1
	by level/ability	Educational support unit	1
		Senior campus (Alternative ed)	1
		Senior campus (Business ed)	1
		Senior campus (English/LOTE)	1
TOTAL			40

Table 3: Breakdown by group, location and gender for those primary teachers whose portfolios were used to develop the draft competency standards.

Group	*Locations represented*	*F*	*M*	*No*
Primary - generalists	Remote/Country/Metropolitan	11	1	12
Pre-primary	Metropolitan	5		5
Primary Junior	Metropolitan	4		4
Literacy, numeracy, educational support	Remote/Country/Metropolitan	4		4
Primary (specialist areas)	Metropolitan	4	3	7
Primary Library	Country/Metropolitan	4		4
Educational support	Metropolitan	4		4
TOTAL				40

Table 4: School location of those teachers whose portfolios were used within the draft secondary competency standards.

Location	No
Country DHS/HS	6
Country SHS	6
Metropolitan (<20K Perth)	16
Metropolitan (20K Perth)	6
Other - Senior Campus/Remote/Central office	6
TOTAL	40

Table 5: Breakdown of gender and teaching responsibilities of those secondary teachers whose portfolios were used to develop the draft competency standards.

Curriculum area	F	M	No
Arts (including drama)	4	1	5
Health and Physical Education, Technology and Enterprise	2	4	6
English 5 2	3	2	5
Languages other than English 2 3	2		2
Mathematics 3 1 3	3		3
Multi -disciplinary/cross-curricular teaching 4 1 4	1	3	4
Sciences	1	4	5
Studies of society and environment 3 3	2	1	3
ESL/Intensive language support 3 1	3		3
Educational support unit 1 1	1		1
Library	1		1
Reading resource	2		2
TOTAL	25	15	40

Of particular note was the diversity of teaching contexts represented in the teaching portfolios which was immediately evident in reading the introductory statements. Teachers worked in various geographical locations including metropolitan, rural, country town and remote areas. The size of the school ranged from two teacher schools to those with over 100 staff. The age and ability range of students taught was different including age specific classes, multiple aged groups (MAGS); cross-curricular groupings and groups based on ability or developmental stage including special needs within mainstream classes to specialist educational support facilities. There were other unique work situations such as the specialist Drama teacher working within a primary school and recruiting students for additional drama experiences from surrounding primary schools and the literacy teacher working with recent adolescent refugees escaping the conflicts of former Yugoslavia.

From this preliminary analysis it appeared inappropriate to use the predetermine categories derived from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards based on teachers' work practices in the United States for the development of the teaching standards using the teaching portfolios initially. The following procedure was developed to group the portfolios and thus form the basis for the development of the draft professional competency-based teaching standards.

Portfolio analysis

Analysis of the portfolios used appropriate qualitative research techniques (Qualitative Solutions & Research Pty Ltd., 1993), in order to generate a set of draft standards from this data source. This process involved the analysis and coding of each portfolio in relation to themes emerging within the portfolios. The analysis of the introductory statements and each of the competencies was completed separately to enable subsequent grouping and regrouping to be carried out. In this grouping process the portfolios where teachers wrote about their professional practices in similar ways were brought together and used as a basis for developing a common introductory or competency statement. The analysis of the contexts, roles and philosophy within the introductory statements provided the initial groupings of teachers based on their teaching portfolios entries. In a few cases re-allocation to another category occurred with the analysis of Competency 1. The greatest differences between teachers' statements were noted in relation to the Introductory Statement, Competency 1 and to a lesser extent Competency 2. For the remaining Competencies 3, 4 and 5 there was a remarkable similarity in the statements made by these teachers whatever their contexts, although examples selected as evidence of attainment of the competency were different.

The dilemma was, therefore, how to convey this underlying similarity (albeit with some significant differences) without

compromising the richness and diversity of the examples. This problem of categorisation was most difficult with reference to the analysis of the secondary teaching portfolios. These portfolios were selected on the basis of learning area representation, however, what is interesting is the inclusive nature of the contexts, teaching styles and locations of this group of teachers.

In the case of secondary teachers this raised the rather difficult question of how best to group the examples given by these teachers for each competency and their introductory statements in order to have appropriate professional competency standards. The preliminary analysis was based on the main learning area taught and two other categories were added to take account of multi-disciplinary and cross-curricular teaching and the work of support teachers.

The examples could just as easily been coherently presented in relation to the type of organizational unit in which the teacher was currently working. There were many similarities in the way teachers in small district high, country high and metropolitan schools or those in large senior high schools in metropolitan or country centres described the challenges and the strategies they had used to meet these. Teaching roles and responsibilities appear to be more diverse in smaller, country schools than in the larger metropolitan schools. There is tendency for subject specialisation and upper school subject teaching for TEE to feature in the accounts of teachers in larger metropolitan senior high schools and less so in those of smaller schools.

This finding has implications for the draft standards. The original research design was premised on the idea of standards drafted for particular subjects, age ranges or level of ability taught categories against which teachers performance might be judged. However, the evidence from both primary and secondary teachers who have been rated as being able to provide good quality evidence is that they typically have taught in and may still be teaching in at least one or more of the proposed categories. So a home economics teacher may also be coordinator of the Gifted and Talented Unit working with high ability students.

Similarly for primary teachers, there is an overarching statement drawn from the written statements presented by all primary teachers in their portfolios. These teachers represent specific groups originally identified in the research as pre-primary and junior primary; specialist subject teachers; teacher librarians and those in various educational support roles. After each statement there are examples for each of these groups selected to represent the kind of highly accomplished practices described by Level 3 Classroom teachers.

Draft statements including references to the Introductory Statement, Philosophy and Competency 1 with associated examples are presented for each of the following categories listed. In this way the reader can judge the similarities and differences that are evident and can see some of the diversity in the specific knowledge bases of these teachers which are underpinned by similar sets of professional skills and values.

The draft professional competency standards are presented for teachers in the primary sector under early childhood/junior, generalist, specialist and support. Primary and secondary teachers in educational support units and those working in the library are presented separately. In the secondary sector, the revised draft professional competency standards are presented for the eight learning areas: the arts, English, health and physical education, languages other than English, mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, support, technology and enterprise and for multi- disciplinary and cross-curricular teaching.

For each of these groups there are descriptions of particular aspects of professional practice. These are based on the introductory statement written by each teacher in their portfolios. These descriptions provide a detailed source of information that is important and relevant to developing an understanding of the contexts in which these teachers work, the values they espouse and the particular areas of professional expertise they have developed in relation to this competency. Competency 2 is presented separately for teachers in educational support, library, primary and secondary. Competencies 3, 4 and 5 are presented as composites with an example from each grouping of teachers as there were few differences in the way teachers from these sub-groups talked about achieving these particular competencies.

However, it would appear that even with the differences noted there is a commonality between these teachers as they write about professional practice. For example, their approaches to teaching and learning are based on meeting the individual needs of the children they work with, it is based on student outcomes, pragmatic but underpinned by critical reflective thinking and a constant desire to improve learning outcomes. They make use of previous experience, both their own and colleagues; professional associations, reading, action research, collaboration, networking and various types of professional development to support the problem-based approach that they bring to the everyday work of the classroom. They also work to communicate their professional expertise to others through various personal professional, school and community based initiatives.

Issues arising from the data analysis

One of the most conspicuous features of the teaching portfolios is the richness and diversity of the entries provided as evidence of attainment of each of the competencies. Teachers provided considerable detail in their accounts of the strategies they use in these different contexts in relation to each competency. This presented a dilemma in documenting this richness of data. It should be noted that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been working on their program for over 10 years.

It was considered important to frame standards in such a way that they took account of the diversity represented in the applicants for Level 3 Classroom Teacher positions. Thus these standards attempt to capture the wide range of professional contexts in which teachers work, characterised by the various elements of professional practice demonstrated in these diverse settings through the use of examples drawn from teachers' portfolios to illustrate the standard statement.

It has been noted that although the way these teachers wrote and talked about their practices for some of the competencies was remarkably similar it was not always quite the same. The differences noted related to the specific 'knowledge' which teachers brought to the professional practice. This was particularly evident in the responses to the teaching competencies 1 and 2 that relate to exemplary or innovative classroom practices, assessment and reporting strategies.

Such differences were not unexpected given the literature on pedagogical content knowledge and the importance of 'subject' knowledge to effective teaching (Shulman, 1987). However, the way this knowledge was evidenced in response to these competencies was through its application to the particular context and issues that the teacher was engaged with at that time.

The different types of 'knowledge' referred to in the statements and evidence in the portfolio included; for example, alternative communication systems and technology for working with deaf students; new software and use of information technology; multiple intelligence; Aboriginal language codes and cultural expectations. Not all teachers displayed all this knowledge within one context but their work was underpinned by the acquisition and application of appropriate knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to their current situation.

It is interesting to note that the specificity of the teaching standards has not in practice been an issue. The common beliefs, understandings and practices described as the Professional Competency-based Standard Statement and the examples that follow can serve a different purpose. They provide the optimal standard — a focus for teacher renewal and professional development rather than the basis for selection to the Level 3 Classroom Teacher position. The fact that these standards have been generated from the actual professional practices of teachers judged by their peers as highly accomplished should add to their acceptability as standards to aspire to.

The use of a competency framework for the selection processes has enabled the diversity of professional practice to be reflected in the teaching portfolio and reflective review. Teachers are able to select appropriate examples to provide evidence of achievement of the competency. The judgment of achievement of Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competencies is made on the evidence provided as detailed overleaf.

Setting the Standards

It was critical for the credibility of the Level 3 Classroom Teachers on their return to their school that the standard set for their appointment was seen as appropriate. However, the issue of how to set the standard for selection as a Level 3 Classroom Teacher was first seen as problematic as the draft professional competency-based standards did not exist at the start of the project and their development was dependent on the materials submitted for the selection process. However, it was possible to base the selection of applicants to proceed to Stage 2 selection for Level 3 Classroom Teacher status on a preliminary analysis of the portfolios in relation to the literature on effective teaching and the development of professional expertise.

Analysis of the qualities of those teaching portfolios ranked highly provided an insight into the characteristics of those teachers considered highly accomplished in relation to their professional expertise and practice as demonstrated for each competency. A rating of 'good' for evidence on each competency (a score of 10) seemed to provide the minimum level of teachers' professional expertise and practices which is consistent with the principles of highly accomplished teaching that are available from the research literature. However, this process of selection was an interim process and it was, therefore, recommended that the rating for the quality of evidence which was considered to be sufficient should be 9 (an assessment of one 'good' and one 'fair'). All applicants who score 9 or more on each and every competency should proceed to the second round of selection. The total number to proceed on this basis was 313.

From these portfolios 80 were analysed, 40 primary and 40 secondary to cover various ages taught, learning areas, locations and other categories such as educational support and libraries as part of the development of the Draft Professional

Competency Standards described previously. These portfolios were selected from those rated on each competency in the range 10 - 14. An additional 80 portfolios were also examined; 40 from primary and 40 from secondary. They represented the same types of teacher groupings identified in the original sample of 80 portfolios.

Forty were selected from those portfolios where the evidence had been rated in the range 11 - 9. (good + very good, good + good and good + fair quality of evidence) and a further 40 where the evidence had been rated in the range 9 - 7 (good + fair, fair + fair and fair + poor). This examination of the portfolios, together with the analysis of those portfolios with ratings in the range 14 — 10, presents a picture of the development of 'professional expertise' for classroom teachers. This was derived through analyzing features of the written statements for each competency related to classroom and school practices (1, 2 and 5). The description of professional expertise which emerged from this analysis is detailed below.

Outstanding quality of evidence- Ratings 14/13

These teachers present the evidence of achievement of each competency in a coherent, well integrated and holistic way. Examples cited are often innovative and developed by the teacher to meet specific needs. There is a clear and evident emphasis on the learner as the centre of the teaching and learning in the classroom. The examples they include show an understanding of the complexities within a particular situation. These teachers also draw on their experience in different contexts and of using different strategies to illustrate how particular professional judgements have been made. These judgements are situational and take account of the factors evident in a particular case. There is a clear rationale and philosophy for teaching and learning, assessment and leadership which is evident in the way the evidence is presented.

Very good quality of evidence - Ratings 12/11

The range of examples used is more limited. There tends to be evidence of breadth or depth. Thus the evidence may be very detailed in relation to one or two examples, or include less detailed evidence which draws on more examples which may be disparate and unconnected. These examples lack the coherence and underlying rationale evident in those rated with 14/13. The examples used as evidence of achievement of the competency tend to be modifications of existing material to specific contexts.

Good quality evidence - Rating 10

Whilst these teachers provide evidence of achievement of the competency which is focussed on the student there are fewer examples presented and these are less well developed in their rationale, level of complexity, coherence and breadth of understanding.

Good to Fair quality of evidence - Rating 9

Evidence that is presented here tends to be limited to a few examples drawn from the same or similar context. The emphasis is not always on the student, the teacher being placed in more central and/or controlling role. There is therefore less evidence of achievement of the competency and a view of teaching and learning which does not reflect as much of the complexity of different students' needs and the impact of diverse contexts as more highly rated evidence.

Fair to Poor quality of evidence - Rating 8/7

Again the evidence is limited to a few examples. The link between the practices described and student needs is usually implicit. Descriptions and evidence focus on the input made by the teacher rather than the benefits to and outcomes for student learning. There is little evidence of an underlying rationale for the actions taken in these accounts.

Discussion and conclusion

In this project the draft professional competency standards arise from the competency-based selection processes for the appointment of teachers to Level 3 Classroom Teacher. They are derived from the way teachers write and talk about their work in relation to the five Level 3 Classroom Teacher competencies. These competencies have themselves been derived from research and theories about effective teaching and other competency frameworks which are grounded in the ways teachers write and talk about their professional expertise and practices in their work.

The use of teachers' writings has been chosen to enable their 'voice' to be obvious within the standards. The standards arising from them can be used to inform others about how teachers work in different subjects, at various age ranges, with different cultural mixes and in various capacities such as teacher librarian and educational support. These practices and the underlying professional expertise are demonstrated through the way teachers address the five Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competencies.

These descriptions of professional practices provide evidence of the underlying beliefs, knowledge and skills held by these teachers. These are documented through the personal statements and supporting evidence in relation to each of these five competencies. Teachers have also provided contextual information and their philosophical perspective that have also been analysed to inform the draft professional competency standards. It is these accounts of professional practices which are the basis of the draft professional competency statements (Jasman, 1998).

The draft standards in this research thus reflect teachers' own understandings of what constitutes highly accomplished practice. The standards are constructed from the material submitted in the teaching portfolios of selected teachers from the first round selection process with supporting evidence drawn from the reflective review, assessors statements and feedback from those teachers whose portfolio examples have been used in the draft standards.

As can be seen from the draft Professional Competency Standards comprised of Introduction, Philosophy and Competency statements there is much in common between these teachers in the ways in which they approach teaching and learning: their strategies, skills and the underlying principles which inform their practice. Significant variations are noted, however, in what these teachers need to know about in order to operate in the ways they describe and which are appropriate to a developmental approach to learning aimed at equipping children for lifelong learning.

These draft standards are detailed in the first instance in an attempt to provide a sense of the diversity in the contexts and specific examples of good practice which have been included to support teachers' portfolio statements. A number of teachers made particular reference to the unique nature of their context. This uniqueness related to the particular students these teachers taught. The students might be characterised by their particular abilities or disabilities, location, subject specialisation, English language proficiency, ethnicity or cultural background.

The examples they provide in relation to their innovative and exemplary teaching practice are clearly more detailed and comprehensive than provided by the summaries in the draft statements. However, it is anticipated that these will go some way to making public the range and diversity of strategies used by classroom teachers in different contexts to meet the particular challenges presented. In the final statement it may be possible to select particular examples to illustrate best practice in considerably more detail than offered in the draft standards.

The use of a generic competency based approach enables teachers to produce evidence in the teaching portfolio drawn from the many diverse organizational contexts and learning areas in which they work (and have worked) and with the many different types of students with whom they promote learning. The examples provided did not have to 'fit' into a narrowly defined category rather illustrate a broadly stated competency and therefore have resulted in a highly inclusive selection and assessment process. It would seem that it is much easier to address a competency with this type of evidence than to try to place the particular unique experience of a teacher in subject, age or level of ability taught type of category.

The standards that have been generated are organized in a similar way to those developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. In the case of the Level 3 Classroom Teacher the professional competency-based standards are more appropriate as a basis for professional development — they are 'aspirational' or optimal standards. The use of the competency framework provides a more appropriate means of assessing the 'standard' of performance a particular teacher has achieved as indicated in previous discussions.

However, the question of whether such standards support teacher education and continuing professional development or limit teachers' continuing professional development has been raised. For example, (King, 1994) has argued there is the potential for such programmes to ultimately create more controls on teachers, further distancing of teachers as 'professionals' from lay persons and inhibiting collaborative efforts within schools and their local. Evidence from the development of the Level 3 Classroom teacher career structure suggests that this is not a necessary outcome of standard setting in itself (Jasman, 1998). It is more likely that the potential benefits and detriments are influenced by the purposes of the standards, the 'authority' which has ultimate control over the form of the standards and how an appropriate standard for a particular level in a career structure is determined.

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Endnotes

Detailed guidelines were prepared for the completion of the teaching portfolio. Applicants were required to complete an introductory statement detailing their current and recent teaching responsibilities, a philosophy of teaching and learning, and a discussion of major strengths. In addition, the applicants were asked to provide for each of the five Level 3 Classroom Teacher Competencies 'a clear, concise statement … which demonstrates your attainment of the competency. To authenticate or support your claims you should attach evidence from your work environment.' (Martin, 1997) p.13. This evidence was judged by the assessors on the basis of its validity, reliability, sufficiency and recency and rating from 1-7 allocated for each of the competencies.

The reflective review involves 4-5 applicants sharing, discussing and reflecting collaboratively on the issues, problems or concerns presented by each member of the group in turn. Two assessors observed these discussions and rated each applicant

on 3 of the five competencies.

Assessment ratings of the quality of evidence provided in the portfolio were as follows:

1 — little/no evidence, 2 — very poor, 3 — poor, 4 — fair, 5 — good, 6 — very good and 7 - outstanding.

Each portfolio received a combined score of two rating totals ranging from 14 — 2.

Assessors were required to moderate the ratings until there was only one point difference in their ratings. Issues in establishing professional competency-based teaching standards.